

Strategic Plan 2005

Roadmap to the Future



Civil Law Group



LEGAL AID AND DEFENDER
ASSOCIATION, INC.



A strategic plan for the Civil Law Group of the Legal Aid and Defender Association, Inc. The Civil Law Group provides civil legal services to citizens of low and moderate income as well as citizens 60 years of age and older who live in the Michigan counties of Macomb, Oakland and Wayne, including the City of Detroit. (See back cover for more information.)

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Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan 2005 of the Civil Law Group of the Legal Aid and Defender Association, Inc. (LAD) is the result of a process that took place from March through June 2004 and represents the work and participation of many groups and individuals. The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework of strategies and actions that can be carried out over the next several years by the Civil Law Group as it continues to develop its role of provider of civil legal services in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties and the City of Detroit.

Strategic Plan 2005 features five major groups of Strategies for Action. Each strategy group states a goal and suggestions for implementation. The first group of strategies focuses on building partnerships and collaborations with other entities that serve the law group's client community. The second group recommends strategies for funding. The third group addresses systemic legal work. The law group's internal delivery system is the subject of a fourth group of strategies. And the final group deals with internal and external communication.

"The vision of the Civil Law Group is to be Michigan's best provider of legal services to low income citizens and be a model of excellence from which other providers anywhere can benefit," states the plan.

It also suggests: "In addition to furthering the Mission of the Organization, the Mission of the Civil Law Group is to increase the number of clients reached through direct service or collectively through systemic change, and improve the quality of service through improvements in the delivery system of the Civil Law Group."

The process began with an environmental scan of the law group taken by the consultants. This was essentially a series of interviews of executive leadership and the executive management of the law group in which management spoke candidly about their vision for the future of the law group. The interviews were followed by focus group sessions with leaders of human services organizations in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties and the City of Detroit. The findings from these meetings and interviews became a twelve-

page Consultant's Report and the foundation for an ensuing Strategic Planning Conference.

All 80 members of the Civil Law Group attended the offsite April 29-30 Conference. The group was divided into three teams, each team with its own professional facilitator. For two days the teams explored all facets of the Consultants Report and other issues members felt were critical to the development of a plan for the future. The facilitators took notes as well as formed impressions from the Conference. Each team appointed two of its members to work on the Strategic Plan Drafting Committee. The Committee held four three-hour meetings – and worked between meetings – to hammer out a draft plan based on all the information that had been generated.

Next steps for the plan are review and approval by executive leadership and the Policy Board of Directors. Then it will be turned over to an Implementation Committee to set up task forces, timelines, and a process for review and accountability.

Introduction

The Strategic Plan Drafting Committee of the Civil Law Group prepared the following Strategic Plan. The committee consisted of volunteers who attended the Strategic Planning Conference. The committee used the Consultants Report and the Conference Summary (both attached) as its primary references as well as the individual and collective impressions and ideas that the committee members took from the Conference. The charge of the committee was to prepare a draft strategic plan that reflected the information and views expressed in both reports, and



to add any new ideas or recommendations that the committee believed would be consistent with the entire strategic planning process. Committee members worked under the assumption that, while resources are finite, they should not feel constrained by the question: "How will this be funded?"

The committee recognizes that many of the strategies for action in the plan might already be occurring somewhere within the Civil Law Group or the Administrative Services Group. For example, the organization's Technology Committee is likely working on issues contained in this plan. Or executive leadership might have plans or ideas "in the pipeline" that are similar to ones in the plan, but of which the committee (or conference attendees) had no knowledge.

The plan frequently suggests that "a committee be formed" or "task force be created" in order to implement recommendations. The benefits of high participation in the planning process come with the cost of time and energy spent away from normal work. Management must determine the length of time, what elements of the plan to implement, and the number of people involved.

Committee members believe strongly that the five groups of strategies contained in this plan are an accurate reflection of the needs and issues reflected in the Consultants Report, and of the ideas, issues and problems identified by members of the Civil Law Group at the Strategic Planning Conference. Specifically, the Committee heard, and felt that: It is time for a gradual shift from individual casework to systemic change

and impact litigation. The administrative workings of the Civil Law Group need streamlining and standardization. Problems with the telephone system persist. Attorneys need to be freed up from administrative work. Funding needs to be diversified. Civil Law Group members need to be better informed about what's going on within the law group and the organization. The organization needs more marketing of the law group and itself. The need for partnering, collaborating, and interacting with the community-at-large is still very crucial.

In order to be effective, everyone involved in this process – from executive leadership to rank-and-file members of the law group – often had to be critical of the law group or organization. This necessary process in no way reflects badly on the very fine and effective work of everyone who works in the Civil Law Group. Only through this process can the law group improve, and reach for higher goals.

Members of the Drafting Committee express their appreciation to the organization's leadership for the responsibility of drafting this plan, for the rewarding experience all members gained from it, and for the chance to influence our future.



Mission of the Civil Law Group

In addition to furthering the Mission of the Organization, the Mission of the Civil Law Group is to improve the quality of lives of individuals and families within our client communities through direct legal representation and assistance, and collectively through systemic change in the legal system.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Civil Law Group is to be the best provider of direct legal services and systemic change on behalf of low-income citizens in Michigan, and be a model of excellence from which other providers anywhere can benefit.

Strategies for Action

Group One: Building Partnerships and Collaborations

GOAL

Create new collaborations and partnerships and strengthen existing ones.

STRATEGIES

Strategy One:

Strengthen connection with churches, synagogues, and other faith-based institutions in Metro Detroit.

Implementation

Increase contacts with select faith leaders in order to increase the CLG's base of influential leaders, and to reach out to clients through faith-based communities.

Implementation

The Director of Community and Government Affairs shall work with a volunteer staff committee of individuals who have an interest in this strategy.

Implementation

Establish new relationships with churches, synagogues and other faith-based institutions in Macomb and Oakland counties.

Strategy Two:

Develop list of human services organizations as a ready resource for client work and for central mailing list for outreach and marketing.

Inventory members of the Civil Law Group to gather names, addresses, contact information and profiles of human services organizations that are critical to the CLG's service to clients. Develop an electronic database available on the Intranet.

Strategy Three:

Increase the involvement of all staff members in community activities as representatives of the Civil Law Group.

Implementation

Establish a policy that encourages all members of the Civil Law Group to get involved with professional or client communities through membership, involvement or speaking engagements. A minimum requirement of all professionals is to make at least one appearance per year on behalf of the Civil Law Group. Support staff will be encouraged to participate in the implementation of this strategy on a voluntary basis.

Implementation

Survey Civil Law Group staff regarding current involvement in community activities.

Implementation

- Define community involvement policy.
- Announce and discuss new community involvement policy at CLG staff meeting.
- Define benefits to the individual and the organization of this activity.
- Develop incentives and rewards for individuals for exceptional or exemplary participation in community. (Annual Community Involvement Award or Dorothy Snead Award?)
- Create system to track increased community and professional involvement.

Strategy Four:

Increase the number of pro se clinics, other client legal education (CLE) and other outreach activities.

Through the efforts of the Private Attorney Involvement Program and the office of the Director of Public and Government Affairs, the Civil Law Group carries out an excellent program of client legal education. In fact, this activity is the single-most effective community involvement effort of the Civil Law Group and the most effective marketing tool to reach our client communities. It is precisely because of this success, that the effort should be increased.

Implementation

- Create staff and volunteer attorney team to design 2005-06 Citizen Legal Education program.
- Executive management assigns increased funding and human resources to this activity.
- Set quantitative goal for number of programs in program year.



Strategies for Action

Group Two: Funding

GOAL

Increase the amount of funds available to the Civil Law Group. Diversify funding base to decrease the reliance on the same funding sources.

STRATEGIES

Strategy One:

Create and follow development plan.

Implementation

Create a development plan that will identify legal service goals and pursue funding that is consistent with those goals. The Plan must clearly state the case for funding needs and in what areas of service the funding is needed. Once the plan is in place, the CLG will evaluate each potential grant for its consistency with the CLG's mission and funding plan.

Include a cost-benefit analysis to ensure that the funding from a new grant will add net revenue or staff capacity to the CLG, or at least have a public relations or community benefit significant enough to justify the time and effort in the grant application process and the implementation of the grant.



Format a small committee of CLG staff and/or board members to assist in research and identification of best practices and funding opportunities and sources, and to ensure plan criteria are being applied to grant applications. The committee shall also seek joint-funding opportunities with existing and potential collaborating organizations.

Strategy Two:

Provide adequate human resources for fundraising.

The fundraising activity for the Civil Law Group shall have at least one full-time equivalent person (equaling 35 hours per week) dedicated to grant writing and fund development. The organization's current Director of Marketing and Development is unable to spend full-time in fundraising and development exclusively for the Civil Law Group. Executive Management shall augment the services of the Director of Marketing and Development so that at least one full-time equivalent person (equaling 35 hours per week) is dedicated to grant writing and fund development exclusively on behalf of the Civil Law Group.

Implementation

- Executive leadership evaluates current resources and new methods to increase development capacity and make decisions accordingly.

Strategy Three:

Seek Best Development Practices from Other Legal Service Providers or Nonprofits.

The Development Committee will make actual and "virtual" visits to other legal service providers and nonprofit organizations that are similar in size, scope and purpose to the Civil Law Group. The Development Committee will research the funding and development community for ideas and best practices.

Implementation

- Visit other organizations in Michigan and nation to learn firsthand development best practices.
- Research philanthropic community for foundations and other donors whose donation policies are consistent with our mission.
- Development Committee identifies local and national organizations for possible site visits or "virtual" visits to learn of best practices in development.

Strategy Four:

Annual Fundraiser

Initiate an annual fundraising campaign that will reach out to the community to raise a set-goal dollar amount as additional funding for general legal services.

Implementation

- Chief Counsel appoints volunteer fundraising committee to develop event or activity for annual fundraiser.
- For example, first-year goal of \$5000 to assist with Another Chance for Education, Senior Legal Empowerment Day, or similar CLG project.

Strategy Five:

Investigate potential revenue opportunities other than traditional fundraising.

The following current potential revenue opportunities will be pursued by the Development Committee, or by CLG individual staff members:

1. NOSSCR Attorneys who represent indigents in Social Security matters.
2. Identify and pursue funding sources that are interested in systemic legal work.
3. Contact Detroit Medical Center regarding potential fees to the CLG to review patient files with unpaid bills to determine whether they meet SSI standards
4. Seek attorney fees sharing from SSI awards.
5. Seek additional funding for Another Chance for Education (ACE).



Strategies for Action

Group Three: Systemic Legal Work

GOAL

Create permanent change in the legal system that will increase the number of low-income individuals and families reached by the work of the Civil Law Group to improve the quality of their lives.

STRATEGIES

Strategy One:

Create a permanent Systemic Law Unit.

The Civil Law Group will create a permanent Systemic Law Unit consisting of three full-time attorneys and two full-time paralegals. The charge of the SLU will be to identify and change processes, procedures and existing law within the legal system and its infrastructure that have a routine, systematically insidious and invidious impact on low-income individuals and families.

Implementation

- Create Task Force to set up Systemic Law Unit.
- Learn best practices through visits to other legal service organizations where impact work is ongoing or where similar units exist.
- Meet with private law firms that specialize in class action litigation to solicit advice and assistance, possibly develop ongoing pro bono relationships for assistance with systemic work and impact litigation.
- Prepare SLU staff with appropriate continuing legal education.
- Design process to identify systemic and impact issues within the current work of the CLG and move to the SLU.
- Design process that will allow all attorneys in the Civil Law Group the opportunity to get involved in the work of the SLU.



Strategies for Action

Group Four: Delivery of Legal Services

GOAL

1. Seek change and improvement of existing administrative functions, processes and procedures of routine case preparation and activity.
2. Shift non-legal work from attorneys to support staff.

STRATEGIES

Strategy One:

Improve telephone system.

The current telephone system is inadequate in its ability to receive calls from clients and professionals who need to reach Civil Law Group staff. Staff members at all levels receive complaints constantly from clients and potential clients – a complaint that is understandable given the volume of client calls received daily. However, staff also receives complaints from court personnel, human service partners, government agency personnel and others who are working with CLG staff on case and client matters.

Implementation

Form a Task Force with Project Director and representatives from all impacted areas and offices to explore software, hardware and process solutions.

Strategy Two:

Standardize basic work product of the Civil Law Group.

Implementation

Standardize the work performed by legal secretaries and paralegals across all units and offices of the Civil Law Group. The two job categories often perform the same or overlapping tasks and functions.

Implementation

Take an inventory and review of existing standardization of legal forms and other templates for routine legal work.

Implementation

Investigate best practices of similar organizations that are highly standardized. The UAW is one example.

Strategy Three:

Reorganization of staff, responsibilities and tasks.

Establish the “division of labor” in terms of what work can be done by attorneys and what work can be done by support staff (paralegals, legal secretaries, clerical). Minimize the amount of non-legal work performed by attorneys. Reorganize staff where consistent with changes in job descriptions or new task responsibilities.

Strategy Four:

Establish minimum mandatory standards for continuing legal education of all attorneys in Civil Law Group.

Implementation

All attorneys should attend a minimum of 10 hours of continuing legal education approved by management.

Implementation

Establish a permanent ongoing CLE committee reporting to Deputy Chief Counsel to develop a list of eligible seminars and programs that meet the CLE objectives of the Civil Law Group.

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Group Four: Delivery of Legal Services (continued)

Strategy Five:

Increase the foreign language capability of the Civil Law Group.

Implementation

Create a Foreign Language Task Force to design and implement a program to increase foreign language capability.

Implementation

Identify internal and external foreign language resources.

Implementation

Appoint a "single-source" foreign language coordinator (existing staff member) who has the ability to locate quickly individuals inside and outside of the law group who can speak various foreign languages – sort of an internal language hotline.

Implementation

Develop internal language skills. Offer Civil Law Group employees "language scholarships" to attend certified second-language courses.

Implementation

In tandem with the above strategy, establish internal language clubs that meet regularly to speak foreign language, including group tutoring at those sessions.

Strategy Six:

Pro Bono Services

Recent changes in management and personnel suggest that any strategic decisions at this point in time need to be made by executive leadership and executive management of the law group.

Implementation

Continue implementation of 2004 Private Attorney Involvement Plan.

Implementation

Develop and implement a strategy to recruit attorneys in Macomb County and to increase assignment of cases and matters to Macomb County attorneys.



Strategies for Action

Group Five: Communications

GOAL:

- 1 Improve the content, frequency and two-way flow of information between Executive Leadership of the Organization and Executive Management of the CLG and all members of the Civil Law Group.
2. Improve external communications from Civil Law Group to client and community groups and other target markets.

Strategy One:

Increase the frequency of internal communication within the Civil Law Group.

Staff members acknowledge and applaud the existing management practices that keep staff informed, such as the Town Hall Meeting, and regular management-to-staff meetings. However, steps should be taken to provide more information – more frequently – regarding organizational goals, objectives, issues, and strategies.

Implementation

- Use and strong promotion of CLG Home Page on Intranet as daily source of current information regarding CLG and Organizational Intranet Home Page as source of organizational news.
- More frequent general staff meetings within CLG to impart news and status of various issues.
- Regular, informal offsite gathering where staff can meet with management for candid conversation regarding CLG and organization.
- Management-to-staff e-letter.
- Assign individual or group responsible for implementation.

Strategy Two:

Improve communication between the Civil Law Group and the entire LAD organization.

Physical separation, difference in practices and everyone's busy schedule create a lack of understanding, concern and appreciation among and between the law groups, units and offices within the organization. The Civil Law Group shall take the initiative to cross these bridges and close these gaps within the organization.

Implementation

- Create a Task Force representing all law groups, offices and units in the organization to design a plan to break down organizational silos to improve the flow of knowledge, understanding and benefits of a horizontal organization.
- Use and promote Intranet as vehicle to improve intra-organizational communication and understanding.



Strategy Three: Improve public relations and marketing efforts of the Civil Law Group to reach the external audiences of the CLG.

Improved marketing and public relations of the Civil Law Group will increase the awareness of the CLG in the client and supporting communities. Increased awareness and an enhanced image of the CLG will send a message to the CLG's external universe that its work is important, vital and worthy of financial support and growth.

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Group Five: Communications (continued)

Implementation

- Design and implement a Marketing Program that will identify and reach key target audiences including: 1. Client communities; 2. Corporate and law firm communities; 3. Foundation and donor communities; 4. Human services.
- Include strategies to reach target client groups as identified in LSC grant application:
 1. Housing and Real Property;
 2. Income Related;
 3. Education;
 4. Family Matters;
 5. Consumer Matters;
 6. Transportation;
 7. Health Care.
- Improve coordination of marketing, public relations and community outreach among Macomb-Oakland offices and Detroit-Wayne County office.
- Seek in-kind assistance from public relations/marketing firm.
- Create Task Force to take inventory and evaluate current marketing and public relations efforts.
- Develop and implement marketing plan for Metro Detroit service area considering all forms of conventional and technological methods of marketing and communications.



Acknowledgements

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